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Subject: "Competition and the Real Estate Workshop" -- Comment, Project No. V050015

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I would like to comment on the "competitiveness" or lack thereof in the real estate industry as it applies to the Fernandina Beach/Amelia Island Florida area. Being new to the industry, I can tell you from my observations there is a dire need for more competition especially where the NAR and their control over the MLS is concerned. There is absolutely no competition in the database of listings and the local NAR forces people to join the association in addition to paying an MLS fee in order to get access to the only MLS database of listings there is. I tried to cancel my membership in the association and MLS and the local NAR proceeded to interfere in my employment agreement between me and my broker by telling me I would have to have my license placed on inactive status because I refused to pay fees being forced on me by a monopoly for a service I was not currently using. The NAR then proceeded to tell me that I could stay active if I "came in and signed a form saying I won't use the MLS and pay a fee." This is the first time I have ever run across someone trying to charge me for not using something. The NAR attempts to give potential buyers and sellers the illusion that simply because someone has paid them money and subscribed to their "code of ethics" they are somehow better protected and getting better service when in actuality this does not prevent fraud from occurring because they give no guarantee that it won't occur simply because someone has paid the NAR money to belong. They have also started a campaign to get real estate people here to write you to say there is plenty of competition so I think that speaks volumes to the fact that more regulation and competition is needed. That is my experience after being in the industry for 5 months.

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